

Sea Grant Postcard from the Field



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Land Lost

On a disappearing coast, Sea Grant meets with traditional ecological knowledge holders to develop a vision for the future.



"Science and traditional ecological knowledge can be viewed as complimentary information, that is, as two narrative threads that enrich, expand, and illuminate a common story." - Matthew Bethel, Louisiana Sea Grant



Land Lost

At the very end of LA-56 - about as far south as you can go before starting to swim - lies the small fishing village of Cocodrie, Louisiana and the frontline of the state's disappearing coast. A combination of oil and gas exploration activities, flood control engineering of the Mississippi River and rising sea levels is accelerating the pace of erosion and land loss.

It was with this rapidly-changing and human-impacted landscape as a backdrop that Sea Grant staff and partners met in April 2018 to develop a vision for furthering Sea Grant's role in integrating traditional ecological and local knowledge and best practices into its research, extension and education work.

"Traditional ecological knowledge" refers to a sophisticated knowledge possessed by a group or individual about an environment as a result of having lived in and observed that environment for generations. Traditional knowledge is both evolving and current, and incorporates historical, cultural and spiritual perspectives. While often used interchangeably, "local knowledge" often refers to more recent observations while also integrating traditional practices in a more holistic way that can be applied to groups who share communal practices.

Including these different ways of knowing into Sea Grant's work can lead to better results when working with predominantly indigenous communities, while at the same time creating rich partnerships between Sea Grant extension agents, researchers and members of local communities.

As part of the two-day event hosted by [Louisiana Sea Grant](#), the Sea Grant visioning team met with members of the [Pointe-Au-Chien](#) and [Isle de Jean Charles](#) tribes to learn

about the changing landscape of coastal Louisiana. This included a lunch with tribal members and a boat trip on the bayou to see the effects of change first-hand.

Read more about Sea Grant's traditional and local knowledge visioning effort: [Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge - and Those Who Keep It](#)

[More about Sea Grant's network visioning efforts](#)

Image description: Five photos (all courtesy of Katie O'Reilly/National Sea Grant Office). Clockwise from left: example of raised house in Cocodrie, LA; drowned and dead oak trees in the bayou; a dinner of local crayfish and shrimp; Matthew Bethel (LASG), Davin Holen (AKSG) and Catherine Schmitt (MESG) discuss the visioning document; and a community lunch with members of the Pointe-Au-Chien tribe.

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